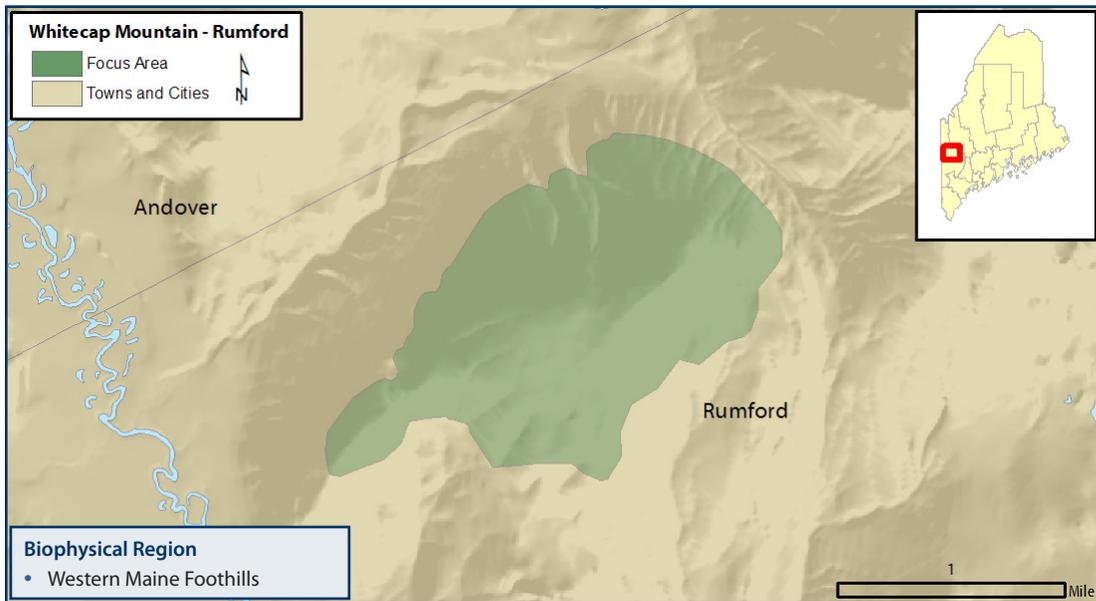
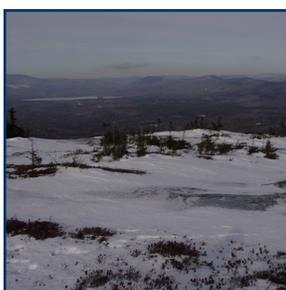


Whitecap Mountain- Rumford



WHY IS THIS AREA SIGNIFICANT?

Whitecap Mountain in Rumford has a conspicuous open wind swept summit that extends for over a mile along the ridge top, offering stunning 360 degree views of the surrounding mountains and valleys below. The entire summit of Whitecap Mountain makes up two rare natural community types, a red pine woodland and mid-elevation bald. At 210 acres the red pine woodland is the largest example of this community type currently known in the state. Good size populations of two rare plant species have been documented along the extensive summit and ridgeline.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION

- » Encourage best management practices for forestry, vegetation clearing, and soil disturbance activities.
- » Minimize recreational impacts on sensitive open summit areas through hiker education and careful siting of trails, combined with monitoring for overuse.
- » Protect sensitive natural features through careful management planning on conserved lands.
- » Work with landowners to encourage sustainable forest management practices on remaining privately owned lands.
- » Work with willing landowners to permanently protect undeveloped areas and significant features.

For more conservation opportunities, visit the Beginning with Habitat Online Toolbox: www.beginningwithhabitat.org/toolbox/about_toolbox.html.

Rare Plants

Mountain Sandwort
Silverling

Rare and Exemplary Natural Communities

Mid-elevation Bald
Red Pine Woodland

Public Access Opportunities

- » Rumford Whitecap Mountain Preserve, Mahoosuc Land Trust

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Whitecap Mountain, Maine Natural Areas Program

FOCUS AREA OVERVIEW

White Cap Mountain is part of a well defined ridge formation that reaches a maximum elevation of 2200 feet. The extensive open summit, which likely has a history of fire, provides sweeping 360 degree views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. The red pine woodland on the summit is the largest example of this community type currently known from the state. The community covers approximately 210 acres and is located on the lower portion of the exposed ridge (mostly above 1700') on the western half of the mountain. Adjoining the woodland is a 55-acre mid-elevation bald, located on the higher, more exposed areas on the east end of the ridge. With less than ten known occurrences in the state, management and protection of this community are very important.

Two rare plant species have been documented along the ridgeline and summit. Silverling, a small white flowering plant, generally occurs in drought stressed habitats typical of the exposed face of the mid-elevation bald on Whitecap. This species has only been found in a handful of locations in Maine. An extensive population of smooth sandwort also occurs at this site. Mountain sandwort is a species of Special Concern in Maine, and it grows in shallow soils and cracks on exposed bedrock. Canada mountain-ricegrass, another species of

Special Concern, is historically known from Whitecap Mountain, where it was last seen in 1924. Many grasses, including Canada mountain-ricegrass, can be difficult to identify and as Whitecap Mountain has not been surveyed specifically for this species it is possible that it still occurs on the mountain.

RARE AND EXEMPLARY NATURAL COMMUNITIES

Mid-elevation balds are characterized by patchy subalpine to alpine vegetation and are dominated by low mats of black crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), alpine bilberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), and lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) interspersed with patches of lichen covered bedrock. Stunted red spruce (*Picea rubens*) trees are widely scattered on the bald, but become denser at lower elevations, where they are more sheltered from wind and weather extremes. Soils are thin and occur in depressions in the bedrock. With less than ten known occurrences in the state, management and protection of this community are very important. These fragile summit balds are easily damaged by overuse, particularly by motorized vehicles including ATV's and snowmobiles. They may also be impacted by excessive trampling by hikers. Careful trail siting and efforts to minimize off-trail use are important management considerations for this

and all other fragile communities that are found above tree line.

Red pine woodlands are open canopy woodlands dominated primarily by red pine (*Pinus resinosa*). Associated canopy species at this site include red spruce and white pine (*Pinus strobus*). The shrub layer includes scattered red spruce, sheep laurel, lowbush blueberry, leather leaf (*Chamaedaphne cacyculata*), and rhodora (*Rhodora canadense*). Areas of exposed bedrock are common, and dry site lichens including reindeer moss occur on the bedrock and areas with very thin soils. This community type is frequently a result of past fire, and the red pine woodland at Whitecap Mountain may have fire disturbance origins. This community type may include rare moths, such as the oblique zale, pine sphinx, and pine pinion, that utilize hard pines as larval host plants but surveys would be needed to determine if any of these species occur at this site. Like the mid-elevation bald, this community type is easily damaged by motorized vehicles and excessive trampling. Careful trail siting and efforts to minimize off-trail use are important management considerations.



Red Pine Woodland, Whitecap Mountain, Maine Natural Areas Program

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

Two rare plant species are currently known to occur within the Whitecap Mountain – Rumford Focus Area. **Silverling** (*Paronychia argyrocoma*) is a state Threatened species that is found in drought stressed habitats typical of the exposed face of the mid-elevation bald on Whitecap. This species has only been found in a handful of locations in Maine. An extensive population of **smooth sandwort** (*Minuartia groenlandica*) also occurs at this site. Mountain sandwort is a species of Special Concern, and it grows in shallow soils and cracks on exposed bedrock. It is widely scattered over the entire exposed summit of the mountain. **Canada mountain-ricegrass** (*Oryzopsis canadensis*), another species of Special Concern, is historically known from Whitecap Mountain, where it was last seen in 1924. Many grasses, including Canada mountain-ricegrass, can be difficult to identify and as Whitecap Mountain has not been surveyed specifically for this species it is possible that it still occurs on the mountain.

CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

- » Intact forest buffers of 250 feet or more should be maintained around known concentrations of rare plants.
- » No ATV access should be permitted on the summits and upper slopes of the mountains.
- » Preserving the natural communities and other sensitive features within the focus area will be best achieved by working to conserve the integrity of the larger natural systems in which these features occur. This can be accomplished through management planning on conserved lands and encouraging sustainable forest management on remaining actively managed private lands. Where late successional and old growth stands remain, these should

Ecological Services of the Focus Area

- Supports regional and statewide biodiversity.
- Provides water quality protection and contributes to the ecological integrity of the Ellis River and associated waterbodies.
- Provides ecological connectivity and habitat for area-sensitive wildlife species.
- Provides support for rare natural communities that are restricted to specific topographical and landscape features.
- Serves as an important large block of undeveloped habitat for a wide range of species.

Economic Contributions of the Focus Area

- Attracts tourism for outdoor recreation.
- Protects water quality of downstream resources including the Ellis River.
- Provides high value forest products.
- Provides scenic vistas that contribute to Maine's natural character and raise property values
- Provides wildlife habitat for a number of game species that are seasonally important to Maine's rural economy.

be conserved when possible. Additional areas should also be aside from timber harvests to allow for the development of some unmanaged forests. Conserving the larger systems will help ensure that both common and rare natural features will persist on the landscape in this part of the state.

- » Recreational use of this focus area should be managed to prevent potential negative impacts on important resources and recreational values. Education of users can help to limit any damage from recreational activities, especially in sensitive areas such as ridge lines and summits. Both motorized and non-motorized users should be encouraged to minimize off-trail use and practice minimum impact camping. ATV use should be excluded from the summits and upper slopes of the mountain, as well as from wetlands.
- » The rare natural communities on Whitecap Mountain support rare and sensitive plant species and potentially wildlife species. Although half of these high elevation lands are within protected conservation land, recreational use can pose a threat to sensitive plants and communities along

ridgelines and summits. The fact that these communities occur in an area with recreational and scenic value adds to the potential for overuse. Proper trail construction, monitoring, and hiker education to minimize off-trail use can help to minimize recreational impacts.

- » With expected changes in climate over the next century, higher elevation natural areas and those with unique underlying conditions (topography, geology, etc.) may become more valuable as refuges for native species and communities. Protecting healthy systems such as those on Whitecap Mountain may provide an important safety net for biodiversity as species adjust their ranges to future climate conditions.
- » Improperly sized culverts and other stream crossing structures can impede movement of fish and aquatic invertebrates effectively fragmenting local aquatic ecosystems and ultimately leading to local extirpation of some species. Future management should maintain or restore the sites natural hydrology.



Whitecap Mountain, Maine Natural Areas Program

RARE SPECIES AND EXEMPLARY NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF THE FOCUS AREA

	Common Name	Scientific Name	State Status*	State Rarity Rank	Global Rarity Rank
Plants	Mountain Sandwort	<i>Minuartia groenlandica</i>	SC	S3	G5
	Silverling	<i>Paronychia argyrocoma</i>	T	S1	G4
Natural Communities	Mid-elevation Bald	Crowberry - bilberry summit bald		S3	G2G3
	Red Pine Woodland	Red pine woodland		S3	G3G5

State Status*

- E** Endangered: Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future, or federally listed as Endangered.
- T** Threatened: Rare and, with further decline, could become endangered; or federally listed as Threatened.
- SC** Special Concern: Rare in Maine, based on available information, but not sufficiently rare to be Threatened or Endangered.

*State status rankings are not assigned to natural communities.

State Rarity Rank

- S1** Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals or acres).
- S2** Imperiled in Maine because of rarity (6–20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.
- S3** Rare in Maine (on the order of 20–100 occurrences).
- S4** Apparently secure in Maine.
- S5** Demonstrably secure in Maine.

Global Rarity Rank

- G1** Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals or acres) or because some aspect of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extirpation.
- G2** Globally imperiled because of rarity (6–20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.
- G3** Globally rare (on the order of 20–100 occurrences).
- G4** Apparently secure globally.
- G5** Demonstrably secure globally.